

*The Pentagon Papers—*  
A Discussion

STATINTL

The publication of "confidential" materials has inevitably given rise to a debate concerning a number of different but related problems: To what extent do the revelations contained in the documents throw light on events or policy decisions with which they deal? To what extent, if at all, does the publication of the information contained in the documents jeopardize the processes of executive decisionmaking? How can the conflict between the public's right to know and the executive's need for confidentiality be reconciled? The editors of the *Political Science Quarterly* have in the past published a number of articles dealing with the issue of access to governmental information and the terms on which that access is made available, notably, Adolf A. Berle's and Malcolm Moos's reviews of Emmet John Hughes, *The Ordeal of Power* (PSQ, LXXIX, June 1964) and Theodore Draper's review of Jerome Slater, *Intervention and Negotiation: The United States and the Dominican Revolution* (PSQ, LXXXVI, March 1971). The recent publication of the *Pentagon Papers* has given the controversy new urgency. U.S. Senator George McGovern of South Dakota, candidate for the Democratic party nomination for president, and Professor John P. Roche, from 1966-68 special consultant to President Lyndon Johnson, were asked by the editors of the *Political Science Quarterly* to review the *Pentagon Papers* and to debate in print the political and legal issues to which their publication has given rise.

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Publication of the *Pentagon Papers* has raised a storm concerning the right of the press to publish classified government documents. But the contents of the papers are so sweeping in their disclosures of official suppression of the realities in Vietnam, so revealing of the disastrous, secretly conceived policies and practices which led us into this tragic war, that it is impossible—in fact it misses their true significance—to discuss them in such abstract terms.

The integrity of our democracy is profoundly involved, not only in the constitutional sense with respect to the war-making power, but in the basic sense of the reality of government by popular rule. It is axiomatic with us that a free people can remain free only if it is enlightened and informed. It is axiomatic with us, as well, that a free press is essential to the creation and maintenance of an enlightened and informed people. A press which what our executive leadership knew and what it led the nation